

GOVERNOR NIXON SIGNS AUTISM AND DISABILITY LEGISLATION *(by Local 13*

President Katie Fenlon)

The following legislation was recently signed into law by Governor Jay Nixon which will have a positive affect on the lives of Missouri residents:

- **Students with Disabilities:** House Bill 236 establishes Kaitlyn's Law, which requires school districts to allow certain students with disabilities to participate in graduation ceremonies after four years of high school attendance. For many students with disabilities, an individualized education plan determines when a student graduates. In some cases, a plan will call for job-training and transitional services until the student turns 21. Kaitlyn's Law will ensure that Missouri students can walk at graduation with their class, while still being able to take advantage of services they need to move on to the next stage in their lives. The law is named for Jackson High School student Kaitlyn Thompson.
- **Autism:** House Bill 525 requires the Department of Mental Health to establish programs and services to help families meet developmental and training needs of family members diagnosed with autism. The department must establish five regional programs to provide services to meet the needs of people with autism. The bill also creates a Missouri Parent Advisory Committee on Autism, which will submit an annual report to the Missouri Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders, the governor and the department director.

There is much more work we need to do to make the lives of children with disabilities better, however, the above legislation is progress to build on.